



VOICES & VISIONS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004



Many Voices, One In Christ

SECTION C

Conference Newsletter Begins Exciting New Format

The Southeast Conference is excited to introduce a new format for the publication of our newsletter, *Voices & Visions*, as an insert to the *United Church News*. This transition will bring both Southeast Conference and national news of the United Church of Christ directly to the homes of our members at no additional cost to members. "This new relationship will increase awareness of Conference events while building a stronger identity with the national denomination," said Tim Downs, Conference Minister.

The Conference will realize substantial cost savings in printing and distribu-

tion with this new approach which will also free additional time in the conference office for other projects. Over the past years, the *United Church News* has increased its circulation to over 175,000 and now prints inserts for 30 of the 39 conferences, indicating a high level of satisfaction among conferences with this approach. The conference office was especially successful with the collection of addresses from our churches, with over 5,000 names now added to the mailing list. For churches who have not responded, please contact Gerri Hudson in the conference office to discuss how your members may receive the newsletter.



Developing Leadership for the Emerging UCC

By Kathy Clark

What do Piedmont College, Bangor Theological School, Eden Seminary, the UCC Parish Life and Leadership Team of Local Church Ministries, and the Southeast Conference have in common? All share a commitment to a learned leadership within the church and a desire to use their resources to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

Ministry, in its most basic sense, refers to the call of all baptized persons, including both lay and ordained, to leadership within the church and service in the world in the name of Jesus Christ. During November 2003, representatives from the above institutions met in the Southeast Conference for conversations about how we form lay and ordained leaders for the emerging United Church of Christ. Recognizing that each institution has a unique history and resources for the work of ministerial preparation, conversation also focused on ways to collaborate in preparing men and women for ministerial leadership in the future church more effectively.

What does the emerging United Church of Christ look like? According to Rev. Dr. Timothy Downs, Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference, the emerging UCC in the southeast is "profoundly diverse and eclectic," and provides a moderate to liberal voice on theological, ethical, and social issues in an area of the United States where few such alternate voices exist. In the Southeast Conference, which includes Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama,

Mississippi, and parts of Tennessee, more than half of the members of UCC churches are African American and, while the sizes of our churches range from more than 5000 to less than 50, the majority of our churches have less than 100 members.

Sixty percent of our churches are pastored by bi-vocational ministers, many of whom are licensed and have been "non-traditionally" trained. The Conference continues to grow by the addition of new members in established congregations, by welcoming new churches, and by nurturing new church starts. Most churches that find their way to us are attracted by our liberal stances and our new church starts are organized around principles of social justice and a gospel sense of radical inclusivity.

The Southeast Conference is reflective of growing trends throughout the wider church, according to Rev. Lynn Bujnak, Ministerial Formation Coordinator of the UCC Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team. Nationally, the majority of new church starts are multi-cultural, multi-racial, open and affirming, and accessible to all. The UCC of the future is radically inclusive, profoundly hospitable, and dares to risk "respectability" for the sake of witnessing faithfully to the gospel.

At the same time, more than half of UCC congregations throughout the United States have less than 200 members and are led by part-time pastors. Since most churches fewer than 200 members cannot afford to hire pastors with college and seminary debt, a leadership challenge lies before us. To paraphrase a familiar gospel passage, while the harvest is plentiful, traditional laborers are few. There is a need

for multiple paths to form well-trained leaders, both lay and ordained, for spreading the gospel in the church and society.

While these trends are taking hold within the church, new trends are emerging in seminaries, as well. According to Dr. Bill Imes and Dr. David Greenhaw, presidents of Bangor Theological School and Eden Seminary, respectively, goals for the next five years at both institutions include developing programs for training lay ministers. These programs will not become substitutes for traditional Master of Divinity programs but will become complementary means of equipping leaders for the future. Clearly, the church of the future will be led by both lay and ordained individuals, not all of whom will participate in the traditional model of preparation that includes four years of college and three years of seminary. Colleges, seminaries, judicatories, and local churches need to

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"I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL . . . AND YOUR YOUNG SHALL SEE VISIONS AND YOUR OLD SHALL DREAM DREAMS."

ACTS 2:17



Equipping Leaders to Strengthen Our Mission

Dear Friends,

Over two years ago, our Conference staff met to envision new ways to strengthen the mission of the Southeast Conference. We agreed to write a grant proposal to seek extensive funding to identify leaders in our congregations and train and equip them for ministry throughout the Southeast Conference.



FROM THE
CONFERENCE
MINISTER

When the task was finished we agreed that, whether or not this grant proposal was funded, our vision was so compelling that we should find

ways to live into it. After the major grant proposal was not funded, over the last year we have written smaller grant proposals and reviewed the Conference budget for ways to live out this vision.

Reverend
Kathy Clark,
Director of
the TAP pro-
gram since

July, and Rev. Betsy Flory, Director of Youth Ministries for the Conference for two years, are leading us into this vision which we called *Project Nehemiah*, using as our text "the people have a mind to build." We recognize that in addition to its ordained ministers, a significant portion of leadership is provided by lay members. We are all called to ministry by virtue of our baptism and that call develops as our faith takes

shape throughout our lives.

Like the Prophet Jeremiah, when we are called we often first protest, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy!"

Through the
TAP pro-
gram, we are
supporting
lay leaders in

articulating their calling to ministry. Through our youth ministries, we hope to help our young people identify their own values and the significance of their faith not only to themselves personally, but as a faithful people called to serve in the world. We are also developing more opportunities for clergy to engage in professional development through workshops and convocations.

I am convinced that the Southeast Conference is a leader in the area of developing ministry for the emerging United Church of Christ. We are seeing renewal in those congregations where lay people are eager to know more about ministry and understand themselves more fully as ministers and where pastors are interested in their professional development. We are also seeing the renewal of our youth ministries. We hope you and your congregation will find ways to be a part of these opportunities.

I write this with thanks for your gifts of ministry and gratitude for the call to each of us to serve the Church of Jesus Christ.

Peace,
Timothy C. Downs
Conference Minister

Conference Begins Process of Bylaws Revision

The newly organized Bylaws Committee of the Southeast Conference, appointed by the Board of Directors, met in Chattanooga on August 23, 2003. Committee members serving to complete this important task include Ginny Nixon, Tim Downs, Wayde Washburn, Milton Hurst, David Speno and Dorothy Gager. Led by Milton Hurst, Chair of the Committee, members present for the August meeting consulted with Lorin Cope, Minister for Conference Relations in the Office of General Ministries of the United Church of Christ, to consider the task ahead and how best to begin.

In light of the changing nature of the Conference and its four Associations, as well as the recent restructure of the United Church of Christ, the committee agreed that its basic task is to explore how we may become "a more faithful and effective instrument for God's mission." From our understanding that the church exists for mission, the committee will seek clarity on

how the church can live out its call most faithfully, and how this Conference and its Associations can best respond to their God-given vocation.

and calling.

At its next meeting, the committee will explore more fully the concept of covenant and autonomy within the United Church of Christ. The autonomy or liberty with which we live in the United Church of Christ exists in the context of a prior relationship or covenant with one another that binds together each of the settings of the church to one another and to God. The committee also agrees that while exploring revisions to our bylaws, they are committed to the use of language of our faith rather than secular or corporate language.

With a desire to conduct the bylaws review and revision process as openly as possible, the committee invites all local churches and individuals to offer reflections and feedback throughout this two to three year process. In their January meeting, members established a timeline, determined ways to effectively communicate its tasks to congregations and clergy, and reviewed the bylaws of other conferences of the United Church of Christ. Tim Downs, Conference Minister, reiterated not only the importance of this task but its timeliness. "The Southeast Conference is eager to explore the ways in which new occasions teach new duties and we are confident that this review will better position us for the future," said Downs.

Training Scheduled for New Church Pastors

On February 19-21, 2004 new church pastors and lay leaders from the Southeast Conference will gather for a workshop at the Church of the Savior United Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee. Using relevant issues, transformative paradigms, and effective strategies, we hope to equip all who attend to move our churches from maintenance to mission.

Our facilitators will be collaborative and covenantal as they present content that is prophetic, purposeful, and provocative. For this premier event for 2004, we hope to present a program format that is inclusive and

interactive. Some of the topics to be covered are:

- Basic Church Financial Management
- Church Administration 101
- Leadership: It's a Question of Boundaries

If you are interested in participating in a challenging and progressive training that will push you beyond the comfort zone, make plans to join us. There is no fee for registration; however, all participants should register in advance by calling Jackie Fowler at 334-265-4411 or email Jackie.fowler@knology.net.

Voices & Visions

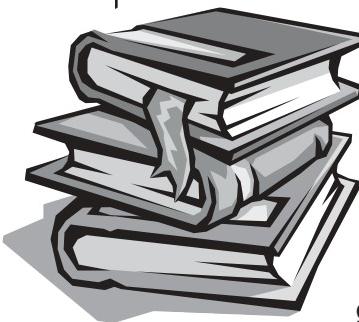
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FOCUS ON YOUTH, WOMEN, MUSIC, OUTREACH

First Church in Montgomery Strengthens Ministries

By Essie V. Buskey

Members of the First Congregational Christian Church at Montgomery are bringing in the new year with newly implemented ministries and initiatives. Leading the charge to invigorate our youth ministry are Walter Thomas and Rebecca Jackson with their well received fifth Sunday youth service and fellowship dinner. The congregation and invited guests, including youth from throughout the community, have enjoyed witnessing the array of talents displayed by the church's youth as they presented a series of moving services, including keynote speakers, acolytes, ushers, prayer, scripture, beautiful music, service award presentations, and wonderful fellowship dinners. Congratulations and commendations are extended to the 2003 keynote speakers Timothy Harding, Shuntia Grimes, Pierre Mayes, and Jermaine Harding.

The first in an informative series of Women's Health Conferences was held at First Church on Saturday, December 6, 2003 from 9 a.m. until noon. Coordinated by Tumi Arkadie in conjunction with the Women's Fellowship, this free conference will be offered quarterly as a vital part of the church's Health and Wellness Outreach Ministry. Topics addressed at the conference included breast cancer, hypertension, hormone replacement therapy, and diabetes. Free blood pressure checks are given each fourth Sunday immediately after the morning worship service. Additionally, each month, informative and timely health facts are distributed to the members of the congregation. The health focus for the month of December included aids awareness and diabetes.

A new quartet, "Blended Voices," and a dynamic Male Chorus, newly

organized by Musical Ministry Task Force Chair, Velora Ford, recently made their grand debut. In addition to these new ensembles, the Musical Ministry consists of the Chancel Choir, the Contemporary Gospel Ensemble, and the children's Carol Choir.

The Christian Mission and Community Outreach Task Force, chaired by Willie and Teresa Jackson, involved the entire congregation in a thriving food pantry effort for the needy. The First Congregational Christian Church family continues to work hard to be a beacon of light and service in our downtown community. We thank God for His many blessings as we continue to grow in number and in spirit.

Essie V. Buskey is a long-time member of First Congregational Christian Church in Montgomery, Alabama and past chairman of the Board of Trustees. She now serves as Chairman of the Stewardship Council Task Force.



Jermaine Harding speaks to First Congregational Church at their newly implemented Youth Ministry Fifth Sunday Service

A new community ministry, the Women's Fellowship Health Conference, featured Beatrice Scruggs, RN, MSN, from the B&D Cancer Center in Tuskegee, AL as their speaker.

Revival at Midway Celebrates Renewal of Ministries

Many of the Southeast Conference staff traveled to Midway Congregational Church, UCC in Midway, Georgia to lead a three-day revival on October 10-12, 2003. This revival celebrated the renewal of the ministries of this historic congregation. In the opening worship service on Friday evening, the Rev. Bennie Liggins brought the congregation to its feet with his vigorous call to renewal. On Saturday morning Conference Minister Tim Downs led a reflection on United Church of Christ polity and history, followed by Associate Conference Minister Joyce Hollyday's reflections on the history of the American Missionary Association. Associate Conference Ministers Bennie Liggins and Kathy Clark ended the afternoon with a

workshop on effective worship and music. On Saturday evening, Rev. Susan Mitchell preached the second service of the revival and in the Sunday morning sermon, Tim Downs called the congregation to look to its future.

The church was crowded on Sunday afternoon for the installation of their new pastor, Tom Johnson. Churches from throughout the Midway area came to celebrate this new beginning. "This revival has been an inspiration, and it makes me proud to be a member of the United Church of Christ. I learned so much about my traditions and my roots and I have such hope for our ministries as we move forward," said one Midway Church member.

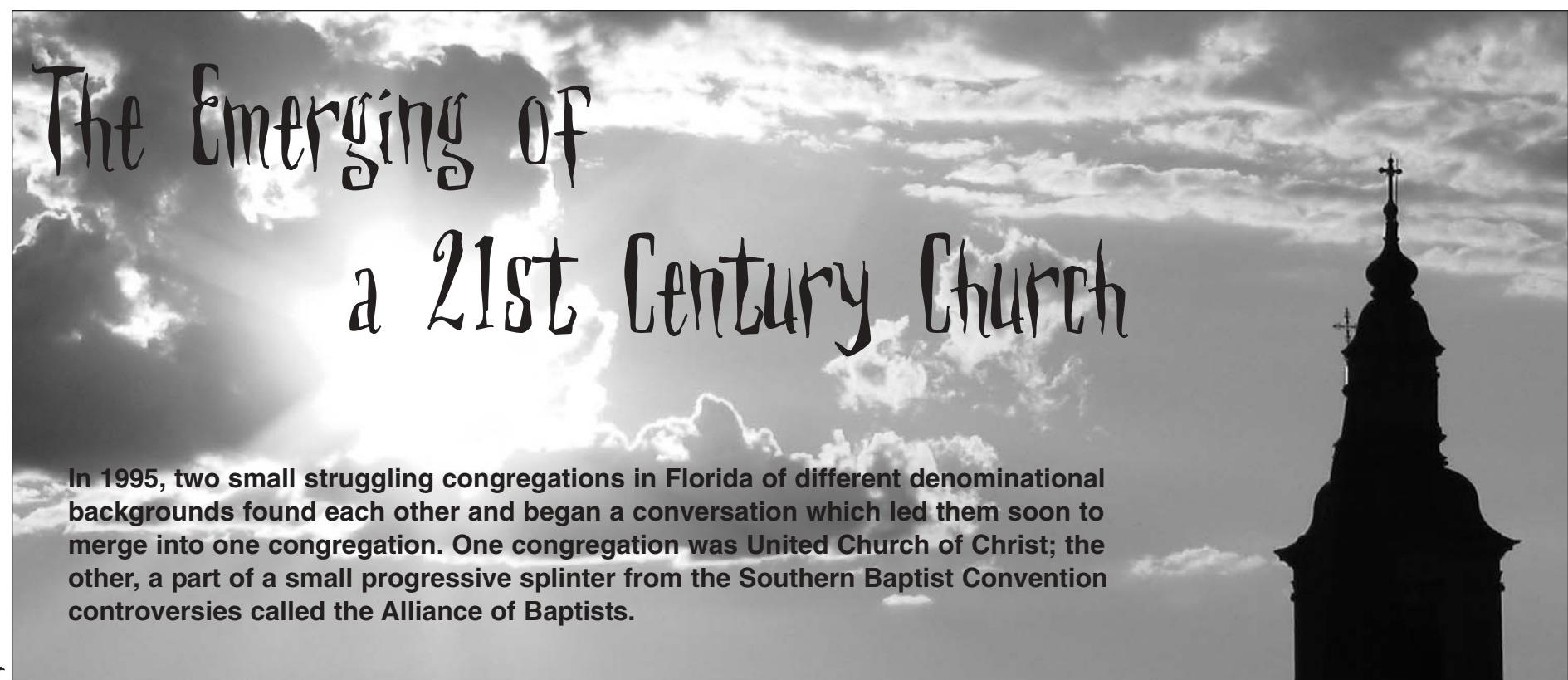
DON'T MISS THE NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE!

All articles and announcements for the May edition of Voices & Visions must be submitted no later than March 10 to Mary Kendrick Moore, Editor, at mmoore@mindspring.com. To coordinate with the mailing date of May 1, announcements about upcoming events should include events scheduled after May 5.



Conference Staff Available to Lead Revivals

The kind of revival experienced by Midway Congregational Church last fall can inspire a church to dream new dreams, implement new visions, and foster a new level of commitment. Members of the Southeast Conference staff are available to provide leadership of revivals throughout the conference. Churches interested should contact Tim Downs, Conference Minister, at 404-607-1993 or tdowns@secucc.org.



In 1995, two small struggling congregations in Florida of different denominational backgrounds found each other and began a conversation which led them soon to merge into one congregation. One congregation was United Church of Christ; the other, a part of a small progressive splinter from the Southern Baptist Convention controversies called the Alliance of Baptists.

In the last eight years, this seedling conversation has blossomed into an ecumenical relationship between the United Church of Christ and the Alliance which is having a significant impact on the life of the Southeast Conference. Several Alliance congregations have joined the UCC, and significant numbers of Alliance ministers are serving in UCC settings throughout our conference. Also joining this conversation in the last year was the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which has been in an ecumenical partnership with the United Church of Christ for over three decades.

Tim Downs, Southeast Conference Minister, has been a part of these conversations since 1996 serving as one of five on the UCC team. "You can understand why one might enter a conversation with Baptists with just a little cau-

tion, given many preconceptions. However, over the years of this conversation differences which appeared on the outside to look daunting have been matters of little consequence. The range of our shared values in faith has been remarkable," said Downs.

Both the UCC and the Alliance show great respect for the freedom of conviction of the individual believer. Out of that respect, both traditions honor and celebrate theological diversity and are ecumenical in spirit. Both have a long history of seeking to develop educated clergy. The Alliance and the UCC both affirm the liberty of local congregations from ecclesial oversight, but at the same time celebrate voluntary association or covenant. Both communions have a long history of witnessing in the name of Christ to matters of peace and justice. In summary, the conversations have

been characterized by the special warmth that marks the meeting of kin.

Issues that held the potential to be divisive were overcome by an overarching and shared ecumenical spirit. Infant baptism was respected by Alliance and Disciples participants, and believer's baptism was honored by United Church of Christ. Conversations about the differences between sacraments and ordinances (as the Lord's Supper and Baptism are named in the Baptist tradition) failed to raise any significant level of disharmony. Instead, different understandings tended to deepen our understandings of our own traditions and appreciation for those of the others.

This relationship between three communions is entering a new phase. Last year, the Alliance, the General Synod of the UCC, and the Disciples voted to continue conversations toward an increasing

partnership. A new team is now gathering to begin to explore ways to further deepen this partnership. Dr. Annie Neal, member of Howard Congregational UCC in Nashville and vice-moderator for General Synod XXIV, and Tim Downs will serve on this ongoing committee to direct the conversation between the Alliance, the Disciples and the UCC. Ongoing issues to be addressed will include ways we can share in ministry and mission, locally, nationally, and overseas.

This dialogue is one that symbolizes shifting patterns of American denominationalism in the 21st century. Pilgrims who share faith values rooted in a common understanding of Gospel of Jesus Christ and its call to the Church to be a transforming and reconciling presence in the world in the name of Christ will find ways, as we are finding them now, to walk together.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PEACE CHURCH

Georgia/South Carolina Association Holds Annual Meeting

By Dave Speno

The 34th Annual Meeting of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, held on September 12-13, was hosted by the Bethany Congregational Church, UCC, in Thomasville, Georgia. The gathering began with fellowship and dinner on Friday evening, followed by opening worship. Worship was led by the Rev. Elaine Sipe.

This year's theme, *What it Means to be a Peace Church*, highlighted the scripture lesson in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Programs on Saturday included two featured speakers: Rev. Jonathan Larsen, Regional Superintendent of the Southeast Region of the Mennonite Church, and Rev. Ken Sehested, former Executive Director of the Peace Fellowship. Rev. Sehested also co-pas-

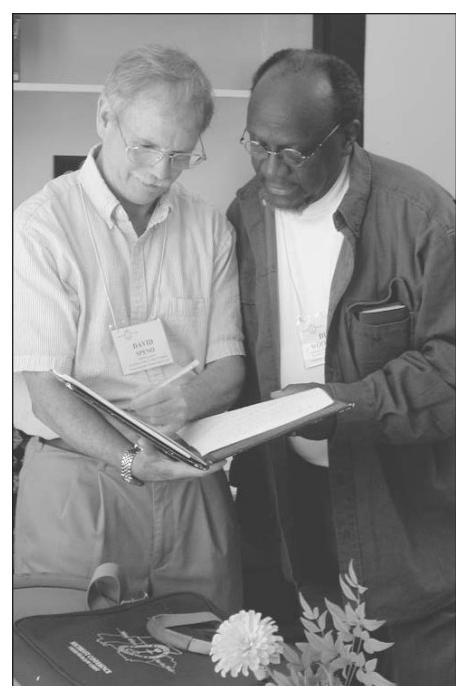
tors the Circle of Mercy Church in Asheville, NC, along with his wife, Rev. Nancy Sehested, and Rev. Joyce Hollyday.

Both speakers told stories of how challenging and radical it is to be a peace church in a world that seems to worship at the foot of violence and ideological and theological polarity (it's my way or no way). While peace is praised in the private domain, actions seem to indicate scorn in public. Maintaining a peace profile often places one in direct opposition to very powerful political, economic, and religious forces. The call of the Gospel is not to peddle peace harder but to begin to think and act differently. Additional copies of materials provided by the speakers on peace initiatives can be requested from the Southeast Conference office.

Following the program, the

Association conducted its regular business session. The minutes of the last Executive Council and the Treasurers Report were presented and accepted. Three additional officers were elected: Francis Bryant Lowry, Vice-Moderator; Dan Garrett, Stewardship and OCWM; and Edna Menchhofer, Association Representative to the Southeast Conference. The meeting concluded with lunch. On behalf of the Association, I extend thanks to the members of Bethany Congregational Church for their wonderful hospitality, good food, and enduring friendship.

David Speno is a pastoral counselor at the Care and Counseling Center of Georgia in Atlanta and currently serves as Moderator of the Georgia/South Carolina Association and Chair of the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference.



Rev. Dave Speno, Moderator of the Georgia/South Carolina Association review meeting plans with Dick Woodward, Pastor of First Congregational Church UCC in Savannah.



Celebrating

The people at Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC in Birmingham, AL celebrated 100 years of ministry since the church was started in 1903 in downtown Birmingham.

By Susan Rice

The 100 year anniversary worship service, held on November 23, 2003, was led by Rev. Bud Precise. Special music included organ pieces by music director Tim Tipton that would have been commonly used in church services during the early 1900's as well as a handbell solo by former member Susan Rice. During the service, a certificate was presented to the church by the Southeast Conference honoring 100 years of ministry to the community.

Following worship, attendees shared lunch and were entertained by a jazz band consisting of several church members. A memorabilia table highlighted memories for church members. Ethel Owen, a member of Pilgrim since 1934, provided



Fabric painted memories will be joined together in a quilt commemorating Pilgrim Church's 100th anniversary.

100 Years In Ministry

a videotape of the 1959 groundbreaking ceremony for the current building, showing various stages of construction and the cornerstone ceremony. It was great fun to see members who are now adults with adult children of their own portrayed in the video as young children. A history of Pilgrim Church was updated by Fran Feazel, church historian, and given to all present. Attendees were also invited to write words of congratulations with fabric paints on squares of cloth that will be made into a quilt and displayed in the church.

Exactly 100 people attended this 100th birthday party as former members traveled from Chattanooga and other places. Everyone had a wonderful time of renewing friendships and celebrating the first 100 years of Pilgrim Church in Birmingham.

Susan Rice is a member of Beloved Community UCC in Birmingham. A Tap graduate, she is enrolled in Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and is active in the parish nurse movement.



Members of Pilgrim Congregational Church celebrate 100 years of ministry since their founding.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE

Building Community, Building Justice is the theme for this year's Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference to be held on June 11-12 in Demorest, Georgia. The Annual Meeting will be hosted by Piedmont College in Demorest, GA, the most recent college to affiliate with the United Church of Christ. Piedmont is also the site of Covenant Congregational Church, a new church start that is meeting in the Music and Worship Center of the college. The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is planning an event that encourages family and youth attendance, including worship

and special programs for children and parents together, as well as a range of innovative youth programs.

This year's meeting promises an exciting and challenging program. The Planning Committee is excited to announce two exceptional program leaders. The nationally renowned Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, Professor of Religion at Piedmont College, will preach at our Friday evening worship. The Rev. Lillian Daniel, who preached a powerful sermon at General Synod in Minneapolis, will offer a keynote address. Daniel, originally from South Carolina, is the pastor of

Church of the Redeemer in New Haven, CT. Additional keynote speakers and program presenters are being confirmed.

Apart from an insightful program, attendees can enjoy a picnic, a blue grass band, and the beautiful vistas of the North Georgia Mountains. Plan to attend and bring not only yourselves, but your youth and your children — it will be a lively family affair!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
JUNE 11-12, 2004





Youth Happenings

Demonstrating a Denomination's Commitment to Youth

By Ellen Green

Last spring, when Betsy Flory, our Southeast Conference Director of Youth Ministry and a former youth minister at my home church, asked if I would be interested in applying for the United Church of Christ's national Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries (CYYAM), I was thrilled. A chance to travel around the country and work with other young people sounded like the opportunity I'd been waiting for to put my talents to work in the UCC and learn more about our denomination.

Little did I know just how much I would learn, even in the first few months of my two-year term of service. Growing up, I thought my brother and I were fairly well versed in the history of the church. Both of our parents were ordained in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, with our father going on to pastor UU and Congregationalist churches in Milton and Concord, Massachusetts, and ultimately ending up as minister of St. Anthony Park UCC in St. Paul, Minnesota. For the past six years, my mother, brother and I have attended Pilgrimage United Church of Christ in Marietta, Georgia, an actively open and affirming congregation and recipient of the UCC's Just Peace Award. Though small, Pilgrimage has a missions committee on which my family serves that is devoted to neighborhood outreach and service.

While I have always been proud of the values my home church stands for in the community and in my life, it wasn't until I visited UCC headquarters in Cleveland on September for our first three-day, bi-annual CYYAM meeting that I discovered that one unique aspect of what makes our denomination truly different is its commitment to empowering youth and young adults. Demonstrating this commitment, CYYAM gives twenty-five elected representatives — ranging in age from high schoolers like myself to twenty-something college graduates and who speak for conferences from Puerto Rico to Hawaii — the opportunity to share ideas and propose projects to improve youth ministry in the United Church of Christ.

CYYAM's current project is encouraging local churches and conferences to institute the 10% mandate passed by General Synod and adopted by all national boards and councils. This mandate proposes that all representative bodies and committees that help direct the life of the church be composed of at least 10% youth and young adults. For example, a local church could recruit youth group members to sit on a pastoral search committee as well as to act as liaisons to represent youth interests on permanent boards.

Additional areas on which the Council will focus this term are promoting the use of *Our Whole Lives*, the UCC's human sexuality education curriculum; and working to publish evangelism literature aimed at

youth. Additionally, we will be collecting ideas from local churches on how to effectively track high school graduates to keep them connected to their faith in the college years. With these ideas, a topical booklet will be created to encourage local churches to keep graduates' addresses for cards and care packages and to reach out to students at local campuses who are seeking a welcoming church home.

With regard to these projects or any youth and young adult concern, I would love to be in communication with all conference churches and may be reached at rushed_tale@msn.com or (770)425-9004. I am particularly interested in creating an e-mail list-serv to provide conference youth with updates on Justice and Witness Ministries and how they can get involved in activism.

In addition to our conference, I represent the UCC Disabilities Ministries on the Council, and would be interested in hearing what youth needs can be addressed in this regard. I am looking forward to serving the conference as your representative during the next two years in communication with the national body. Thank you for your support which allows me to do so!

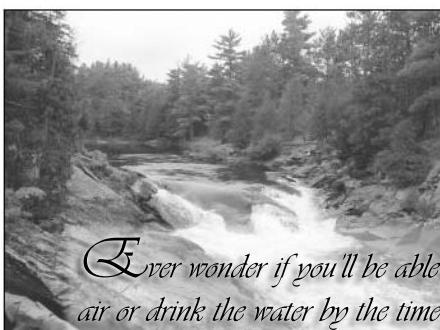
Ellen Green is a member of Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA and serves as the Southeast Conference representative to the national UCC Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Practicing in the Garden

An Adventure for Youth in Ecological Faithfulness June 19-27, 2004

Ever found yourself wondering if there will be any trees left standing or whales left swimming by the time you finish school? Ever get the feeling that somehow those hungry people you see on the news have something to do with you — but you don't know how, or what you could do about it?

You might be surprised to find that there are lots of connections between those things — and lots of things you can do to make things different. Followers of Jesus have centuries of wisdom about good ways to live in communities that can be good for the earth and the people on it. "Practicing in the Garden," funded by a grant from the Valparaiso Project, is a nine-day experiment in ecologically faithful living that will take place in and around an organic farm, on a river, in the wilderness, as well as other sites where our unfaithfulness has become evident in the damage to the environment and surrounding community. This experience is intended to



Ever wonder if you'll be able to breathe the air or drink the water by the time you get a job?

act as a "lab" in which we discover ways we can live more lovingly in God's creation and then share what we learn with our home communities.

If this description stirs something in you, consider whether you may be called to become a part of this first-ever Conference undertaking. Participation is open to young people of high school and college age, and adults from their home congregations. Group size is limited to 25. Registration is \$250.00 per person, including all lodging, meals, presentations, and travel during (but not to) the event. Some partial scholarships are available.

Registration packets were mailed to churches. If you have not received one, please contact Betsy Taylor Flory at 1-800-807-1993 x5 or 404-607-1993 x5. All inquiries are welcome.

National Youth Event to be Held this Summer!

The United Church of Christ National Youth Event will be held in the Southeast Conference at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville on July 22-26, 2004. This is your chance to meet 3000 youth and young adults from all over the UCC, learn cool stuff, attend concerts, do service projects, and discover more about what God has in mind for you. Registration packets have been mailed to churches. If you did not receive one, visit the UCC website at www.ucc.org, click Ministries, and download them from the youth page.

Each church registers its own group *by mail* through the Conference office. If you do not have a minimum group size or do not have the proper number of chaperones of the required gender, we will attempt to pair you with larger youth programs. The sooner you let us know you need help, the more likely we are able to provide it. *Group size, chaperone requirements, and registration deadlines are set in the national offices and are not negotiable.* Please read the directions and requirements for registration carefully and contact Conference youth ministries at 1-800-807-1993 x5 or 404-607-1993 x5 for additional information.





Southeast Conference Board of Directors Faces Its Challenges

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference met for their annual program planning on Friday, October 31 and Saturday, November 1, 2003 to plan for the coming year and to review the financial position of the Conference. After an extended conversation with the Finance Committee and the Conference Accountant, Mike LaBounty, the Board understood that the Conference, while continuing to face financial challenges, is in an increasingly strong position to do so. Additional reports and business conducted included the following:

- The Board received a report from the Women's Commission of the Conference celebrating the recent UCC Regional Women's gathering in Shocco Springs where 160 women gathered from an eight ten. The keynoter, Rev. Nancy Sehested, was very well received and a variety of workshops were conducted by many, including some of the Conference staff.

- Jerry Gladson, chair of the Stewardship Commission remarked that the goals of the Commission will

be to increase awareness throughout the Conference of the meaning of faithful stewardship, and to support congregations as they seek to engage this important issue.

- Tim Downs, Conference Minister, reviewed the status of our new church starts and remarked on three new church starts that are in the process of formation.

- A report was given on a financial consultation held on September 27th in the Conference office. The purpose of this consultation was to respond to concerns raised on the floor of the annual meeting of the Conference. Eleven people from four congregations across the Conference attended the consultation.

- The Board received a report on the initial steps toward organizing the Local Arrangements Committee for General Synod XXV and elected Bennie Liggins and Desiree Pedesclaux as co-chairs of that committee. This committee will be responsible not only for making local arrangements but also for pre-Synod events to assist in fundraising for the hosting of General Synod.

Training Program Developed for Youth Ministry Leadership

By Betsy Taylor Flory

The Southeast Conference Youth Ministries has a two-fold vision: to create programming which extends the Christian formation of our youth begun in the local churches, and to empower and support the adults who work with our youth through network-building and training. The Conference is very pleased and excited to announce the initiation of a training program for youth ministry leadership, open to all those people, lay and ordained, who work with the young people in our Conference.

We are working in partnership with the creators of the Youth Theological Institute at Candler School of Theology to offer a series of nine day-long seminars on various skill-sets which enhance youth ministry leadership. Participants who complete the course will earn a certificate and will be designated as persons who may be available to train or teach these topics within their own churches or others. Additionally, class members will have the added resource of a community of fellow youth workers with whom they may share ideas and resources.

The sessions will be offered about every two months over the course of a year and half and will cover such topics as

- Know Yourself: Understanding Your Leadership Style
 - Cultivating a Theology of Youth Ministry
 - Understanding the Adolescent World
 - Teaching Skills/Creating Bible Studies
 - Teaching Kids to Verbalize and Act On Their Beliefs
 - Polity: Youth Style
 - Discernment and its Role in Creating a Youth Ministry
 - Practical Policies and Processes, Finding Resources, Recognizing Limits
 - Caretaking of Soul and Self
- Seminars will be held at Pilgrimage United Church of Christ in Marietta, Georgia, about 30 minutes north of Atlanta. Classes, which begin February 20-21, 2004, will gather on designated Friday evenings for fellowship and a short program and on Saturdays from 8-4. The June 2004 session will be featured as the Conference Leadership Convocation and is scheduled on Thursday, June 10 preceding the Conference annual meeting. The tuition of \$450.00 covers the cost of all nine sessions, including a light breakfast and a delicious lunch each Saturday. For those who will be traveling, if you indicate your desire for it on your registration form we will locate a host family for you, so that you will not incur the cost of lodging.

Registration begins in December 2003 and participation is limited to 25. If you have not received a registration packet, or you need more information, contact Betsy Taylor Flory at 1-800-807-1993 x 5, or 404-607-1993 x5.

Betsy Taylor Flory is the Conference Director of Youth Ministries for the Southeast Conference and also serves as Minister of Youth at Open Community Church in Atlanta, GA.

Developing Leadership

Continued from page C1

partner with one another to develop new and creative models for equipping clergy and laity to serve with integrity and excellence in the emerging church.

In the Southeast Conference, the Theology Among the People (TAP) program is one means of equipping lay leaders. TAP is a program of theological education designed to help participants discover their own theologies and develop ministerial skills within the context of intentional learning communities. Participants commit to a three year process of mutual teaching and learning in a supportive small group environment guided by a trained facilitator. TAP groups meet in local settings throughout the Conference. In addition, TAP participants and other interested laity and clergy gather periodically for Leadership Convocations that focus on particular opportunities to learn and share knowledge on pertinent church leadership issues.

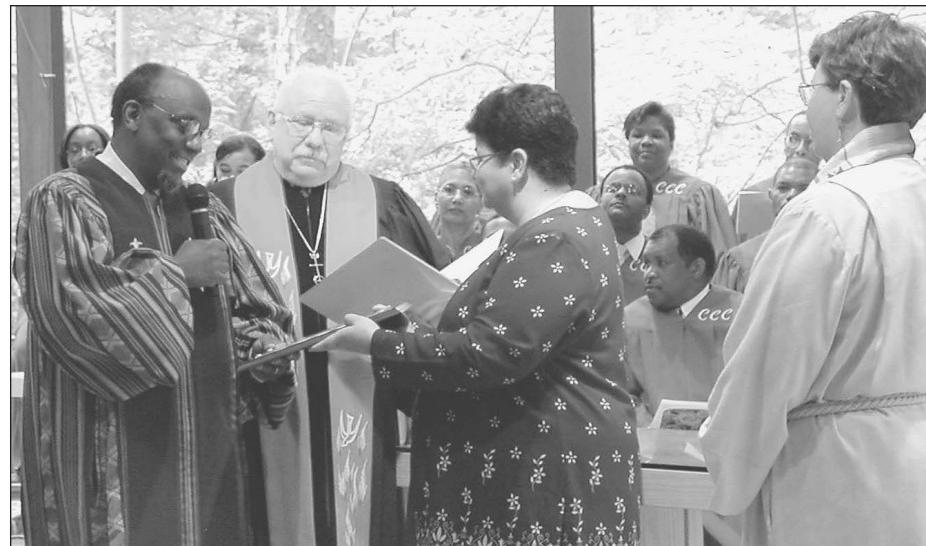
The TAP program has been in existence in the Southeast Conference for more than four years with graduates now involved in a variety of ministries, including hospital chaplaincy, Christian education, youth ministry, ministry among the homeless, worship planning and leadership, lay preaching, and pastoring, among others. At least one graduate has discerned a call to continue her education in a traditional seminary Master of Divinity program.

Currently, TAP is in a period of evaluation, revisioning, and revision of the curriculum, focusing not on what needs to be *taught*, but on what needs to be *learned* in order to form more effective leaders for the church. Bangor Theological School, Eden Seminary, Piedmont College, and the national church office of Parish Life and Leadership, have expressed a desire to partner with the TAP program to create a collaborative model for ministerial preparation within the Southeast Conference. By sharing resources, such as faculties, facilities, and funding, research can be conducted and programs offered that will enhance the life of our local congregations by forming men and women, lay and ordained, to lead us into the church of the future.

The Southeast Conference has the potential to become a beacon for the rest of the church by serving as a testing ground for emerging models of ministerial formation and creative partnership so that all who are called to ministry — i.e., all who are baptized — can be nurtured and supported in extending the ministry of Jesus Christ in the church and the world, now and in the future.

Kathy Clark, Associate Conference Minister for the Southeast Conference, is Director of the TAP program and may be contacted at kclark@secucc.org.

Kathy Clark Ordained



Kathy Clark was ordained to the ministry on August 17, 2003 at Central Congregational Church in Atlanta, GA. Rev. Bennie Liggins, Pastor of Community Congregational Church in Montgomery, AL, preached at the service. Music was provided by both musicians at Central and the choir of Community Congregational. During the service, Kathy was also installed as Associate Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference.

NEW TAP GROUPS FORMING

TAP groups are now forming in Roswell and Atlanta, Georgia, as well as Lanett, Alabama. For questions or to express your interest in either joining or forming a TAP group in your community, please contact Kathy Clark, Director of TAP, at kclark@secucc.org or call 1-800-807-1993 or 404-607-1993.



Southeast Feast

Food for the Heart and Soul



A J-Shaped Conference

By Joyce Hollyday

One of the highlights of 2003 for me was traveling with my niece Kaitlyn in June to Holden Village, tucked high in the Cascade Mountains of Washington state. It's not the kind of place you just drop in on. Getting there requires flying across the country to Seattle, driving four hours over mountain passes to a lake, taking a two-hour ferry trip, and finally enduring a practically vertical bus ride to this abandoned copper mine turned retreat center. Kaitlyn and I joined several other people there to celebrate the publication of a book on spiritual practices for youth that we had written together.

One morning Kaitlyn and I hiked a high mountain trail to a waterfall, taking in astounding vistas of snow-capped peaks and glacial lakes. Along the way, we were mystified by several slopes covered with tall, J-shaped trees. The towering trunks were straight, but the base of each one was curved dramatically away from the face of the mountain. We learned later that the phenomenon was the result of those trees having to endure the pressure of massive amounts of snow

bearing down on them every winter.

I made my first journey to Holden Village to lead a peace retreat last winter, when the season's snowfall passed the 100-inch mark on New Year's Day. We burrowed our way around through icy tunnels and checked the bulletin board every morning. Posted there daily, next to the instructions on what to do if we encountered a cougar on the trails (look big; if you can, unzip your coat, spread your arms, and act menacing), were advisories on where to walk to avoid getting trapped in avalanches. So I had some idea of what those trees were up against.

Two months after Kaitlyn and I returned from our summer sojourn, I co-officiated at her brother's wedding in Birmingham, Alabama. In my blessing of their covenant, I wished for my nephew and his new wife a J-shaped marriage. I offered them the image of those trees, which have to be flexible to endure. What makes them able to bend without breaking is that they are rooted in deep soil — as we are rooted in the deep soil of God's love for us, and our love for one another. I reminded them that none of those trees stands alone.

They share the pressures together, as this new couple's families and friends stand ready to offer support and encouragement for whatever burdens and pressures the years ahead will bring them.

As another new year has dawned, I offer this image to the Southeast Conference as well. I pray that we might walk boldly into 2004 together, offering one another the gift of flexibility and sharing the pressures that face us. And may we be mindful, always, that we are rooted in the extravagant love — and the compelling Word — of God, which will carry us forward and show the way to great things ahead.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

(Isaiah 55:10-11)

CONCERN AND CELEBRATIONS

OUR SYMPATHY

— Our condolences go to Jim Norris, a pastoral counselor in Huntsville, and the former pastor of United Church of Huntsville, on the occasion of the death of his mother on October 27th.

— We remember Steve deClaisse-Walford on the occasion of the death of his sister in England. Steve has also just announced his resignation as pastor of Center Congregational Church, UCC, in Atlanta, and his intention to begin a new church start in Grayson, GA.

OUR CELEBRATIONS

— Our best wishes to Leandra Casson, a student in care enrolled at Candler School of Theology and a member of Victory Church, Stone Mountain. She was married on October 17th. She was also honored to have an article concerning affirmative action published in the *UC News*.

— Congratulations to Marvin Morgan, a member of First Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta and faculty member at the Interdenominational Theological Center, for his election to the Board of Visitors of Elon University from which he graduated.

— Kim Buchanan, Pastor of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA., was recently elected as one of four regional vice-presidents of the newly formed Regional Council of Churches of Atlanta.

— David Menchhofer, retired from active ministry and a member of First Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta, was honored on October 20th as chaplain of the year for his twelve years of service by the Interfaith Airport Chaplaincy of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta.

— Gloria Tate-Reed was ordained at First Congregational Church, on October 19th. She is a member of First Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta and is serving as director of a pastoral care department in a hospital in Reno, NV.

MINISTRY TRANSITIONS

— Dan Garrett received a call to serve as a chaplain at Grady Hospital in Atlanta. Dan was ordained last year in the East Alabama-West Georgia Association and is a member of Central Congregational Church.

— Bud Precise, ordained United Methodist, has been called to serve as pastor of Pilgrim Congregational, UCC in Birmingham. Bud will be installed as pastor at a service on February 8, 2004.

— James Metzger, recently approved for ordination by an Ecclesiastical Council of the Alabama-Tennessee Association, has received a letter of call from Vanderbilt Divinity School. James is enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Vanderbilt and is a member of First United Church, UCC in Nashville, TN.

— Diantha Brown, who has ministerial standing in the Iowa Conference has been called as Interim Pastor of First United Church of Christ in Belvedere, TN. Diantha is a member of Pleasant Hill Community Church, UCC, in Pleasant Hill, TN.

— Congratulations to Tom Johnson, who is licensed for ministry at Midway Congregational UCC in Midway, GA, on the occasion of his installation as pastor of the congregation on October 12th.

— Jim Deming, interim minister at Brookmeade Congregational UCC in Nashville, transferred his ministerial stand-

ing from Ohio.

— Dan Kuhn, who had ordained ministerial partnership and served as pastor of Vine Street Christian Church (DOC), has been called as pastor of Elon community church, Elon, NC.

ACTIONS OF THE GA/SC ASSOCIATION

CHURCH AND MINISTRY COMMITTEE

— Rev. Soo Man Chang was granted dual standing to serve as pastor of Open Community UCC, Atlanta, pending receipt of additional reflections on ministry.

— Curtis Cottman was granted a license to minister at New Life UCC in Tucker, GA.

— Graciela C. Flores was received as a student in care of the Association. Graciela is a member of Central Congregational Church, UCC and a student at Candler School of Theology.

— Recommended T.J. McGiffert be approved for ordination to an ecclesiastical Council. T.J. is a member of Virginia-Highland Church, A Baptist and United Church of Christ Congregation, Atlanta, GA.

— Geni Felsinger's license for ministry was renewed. Geni is a member of Circular Congregational Church, UCC in Charleston, SC.

— Jonathan Nkuchwayo's privilege of call was extended for one year. Jonathan is a member of Central Congregational Church, Atlanta, GA.

— Linda Smith was received as a student in care. She is a member of Central Congregational Church, Atlanta, and a third year student at Candler School of Theology.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 16

President's Day/Conference Office Closed

FEBRUARY 19-21

New Church Start Pastor Training
Church of the Savior,
Knoxville, TN

FEBRUARY 20-21

Youth Ministry Leadership Training
Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA

FEBRUARY 27

AL/TN Church & Ministry Committee
Pilgrim Congregational Church,
Chattanooga, TN

MARCH 20

Personnel Committee Meeting
Southeast Conference Office,
Atlanta, GA

MARCH 26

AL/TN Church & Ministry Committee Meeting
Pilgrim Congregational Church,
Chattanooga, TN

APRIL 9

Good Friday/Conference Office Closed

APRIL 16-17

Youth Ministry Leadership Training
Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA

APRIL 16-18

UCC Office Support Staff Network Annual Meeting
Cleveland, OH

APRIL 23-24

SEC Board of Directors Meeting
Community Congregational Church, Montgomery, AL

APRIL 26-28

Graham Cluster
Epworth by the Sea,
St. Simon's Island, GA

APRIL 30-MAY 1

AL/TN Annual Meeting
United Church of Huntsville,
Huntsville, AL

JUNE 10

Youth Ministry Leadership Training
Piedmont College,
Demorest, GA

JUNE 10-12

Southeast Conference Annual Meeting Piedmont College,
Demorest, GA

JULY 22-26

The E-Attitude: National UCC Youth Event
University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, TN

JULY 23-25

SEC Board of Directors Retreat
Location to be Announced